

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24 SEPTEMBER 2019

Present: Councillor Bridgeman(Chairperson)
Councillors Cunnah, Joyce, Naughton, Parkhill, Phillips, Taylor
and Singh

Patricia Arlotte (Roman Catholic Representative), Carol Cobert
(Church in Wales Representative), Matthew Richards (Parent
Governor Representative) and Connor Clarke (Youth Council
Representative).

26 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Linda Morgan and Graham Hinchey.

Apologies were also received from Karen Dell'Armi.

The Chairperson noted that Patricia Arlotte had been a member of this Committee for 15 years. Patricia has always been a very effective scrutineer holding to account a number of Cabinet Members and Officers over the years. Patricia has also chaired a task & finish inquiry which is not an easy job. On behalf of the Committee the Chairperson wished to thank her for her hard work over and commitment over these long years.

The Chairperson also wanted to take the opportunity to welcome three new members to the Committee. Councillor Thomas Parkhill who had replaced Pippa Hill-John, Matthew Richards the new Parent Governor Representative and finally Connor Clarke who is the new Youth Council representative.

27 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were received from Councillors Naughton and Phillips.

Councillor Naughton declared a personal interest as a Member of the South Wales Fire Authority.

Councillor Phillips declared a personal interest as a Family Member has sought access to some counselling services.

28 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

29 : WALES AUDIT OFFICE REPORT - REVIEW OF CORPORATE ARRANGEMENTS FOR SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN

Members were advised that this report provided the Wales Audit Office with the opportunity to present their report on corporate safeguarding arrangements to the Committee. This item also enabled Committee to be briefed on the actions being developed and implemented, by the Council, to address the recommendations set out in the Audit Report.

The Chairperson welcomed Ian Phillips from the Wales Audit Office to committee who outlined the report, after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

Members asked about Commissioning Services and what the Council should look at in relation this is, in terms of best practice and whether there was any risk to service users. Members were advised that the absence of Safeguarding provision in contracts could potentially be a significant risk. The Council could be more explicit in Safeguarding training provision in contracts. It was noted that it was important to be very clear in what is expected when commissioning provision and having scope to contract monitor those providers.

Members noted that it had been 3 years since the previous audit and asked what timescales realistically should the recommendations from the previous audit have been implemented within. Members were advised lots of aspects had seemed to stall. There had been an expectation for recommendations to have been taken promptly following an audit report; work on these recommendations would have been expected within 6/12 months as a rough guide.

Members asked if this was an organisational issue or if there had been practical barriers and were advised that there had been a new administration; and a new director of social services in the role, who had brought forward what arguable should have been done before.

It was noted that there was very little reference to Children's Rights and members asked if this had been included in the audit. It was explained that it hadn't been a topic in focus; there was narrow scope in terms of this review and it hadn't come up in this particular audit.

Members asked if there was a timescale for follow up for this audit and were advised that there was not, it was an ongoing feature in terms of liaison with the Council but no formal timeline.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance, which includes Corporate Safeguarding, to the meeting and invited him to make a statement.

Councillor Weaver stated that he welcomed the audit report and considered it to be an accurate reflection. The new Director of Social Services had pushed forward the focus to implementation including the Safeguarding Board and SMT and giving the priority and focus that it needs.

The Chairperson welcomed Claire Marchant, Director of Social Services and Chris Pyke, Internal Audit Manager and asked them to take Members through their response to the report's recommendations.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

Members asked for an update on the draft report on the volunteering policy and were advised that it had been sent to HR, would go out to consultation and should be back in November, it would go to the appropriate scrutiny committee prior to Cabinet.

Members noted that achieving a 100% target to get all staff trained in Safeguarding would be a challenge and asked how this was being addressed. Members were advised that it was in the Corporate Plan and was mandatory; it needs to be in people's performance reviews, including those people who don't have easy access to PC's. There were links with Communications Team to market the e-modules, they were advertised on the front of the Intranet page and communicated through Senior Management Team and Safeguarding Board.

Members noted the 61% compliance for training in March and asked what the current position was. Officers did not have the current figures but would provide them after the meeting. The Cabinet Member stated that he recognised that 100% was a challenging target but the reason they do it is to make it clear that it is expected and corporately important.

Members considered that timescales for achieving progress were important and asked if these were mapped out, including target areas etc. Officers explained that the approach they take is risk based; they know where the risk areas are support is targeted into those areas; it was important to have that data available.

In terms of Commissioning, Members asked if any retrospective work was being done in terms of Corporate Responsibility and were advised that it was; Commissioning and Procurement had identified and taken specific recommendations from the audit report to make sure it is included in the contract and the workforce.

AGREED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations discussed during the Way Forward.

30 : CARDIFF & VALE OF GLAMORGAN REGIONAL SAFEGUARDING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT -2018-2019

Members were advised that this report provided the Committee with the opportunity to review and assess the work of the Regional Safeguarding Board for last year. The report covers the safeguarding of both Adults and Children, Members were therefore reminded that Committee can only scrutinise issues relating to Children & Young People.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance, Claire Marchant, Director of Social Services and Kate Bishop, Business manager for the Board and asked them to present the Board's Annual Report to Committee.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

Members referred to the Prevent agenda and concerns over how this was being taken forward. Members asked what work was being done with faith communities to ensure it is being taken forward appropriately. Officers explained that they deliver training to all the Mosques in Cardiff and the Vale. They developed a policy for Mosques and other Islamic settings in 2017; this was now being developed for other faith groups. Prevent had been on the Safeguarding Board meeting agenda, each individual agency then took it forward; there was more work to be done but close links had been built to base it on for 2019/20. The Director stated that there had been good work done to date on understanding all communities across Cardiff, and to work with them developing their own policies. Prevent has its own specific legislation and goes into more detail than general safeguarding, specific to the groups.

Members made reference to Threshold Management being ongoing and Female Genital Mutilation Task and Finish Group and asked how these are analysed for effectiveness. The Director explained that they track the impact of the work they are doing; audits are undertaken; policy implications etc. all looked at together by the Board, working in partnership with our own communities. Members noted the previous task and finish on FGM and considered it may be useful to share this with officers.

In relation to Child Protection Reviews, Members asked how the cases were decided upon, noting that only 5 had been completed; asking if there was a process for Members to feed into the cases that are reviewed and how the reviews feed into practitioners on the ground through feedback etc. Officers explained that there are specific criteria to meet to carry out CP Reviews, this criteria is on the website and available from the referral forum too. Cases then go to the CP Review/APR sub group, who decide if it meets the criteria, if so it is recommended to the Co-Chairs of the Board, if they agree then the process starts onto Welsh Government. It is a lengthy process. The Director stated that the whole ethos is about learning, investing in learning events and looking at learning and outcomes, ensuring that recommendations are reflected to practitioners; to inform policy practice, procedures, audits etc. The Business Unit and CPR/APR sub group keep all the recommendations then disseminate to the board members and practitioners so the information is fed back to the board.

Members referred to the Children's Audit Sub Group, noting that only 1 in 4 priorities had been met, 1 taken forward to next year and 2 have failed. Members asked if the focus had been on too many things and priorities had slipped and what was being done next year to address this. Officers explained that the Board looked at Sub-groups to ensure they work as they should and that their priorities fall out of the annual plans and recommendation of the CPR's. There needs to be streamlined work plans going forward. The Director added that it's about effectiveness, strengthening the sub-group chair arrangements; the chair should be from the Regional Safeguarding Board and fully understanding the priorities across the Board.

Members asked if there was any evidence of Local Authorities in Wales using unregistered Children's Homes, as reported in the media. The Director stated that

this was referring to supported living accommodation being used and that Cardiff regularly uses supported living when it's in the care plan; it would be safeguarded and regularly reviewed. There have been occasions when it's not possible to meet a care plan for a very short time and safeguards can be put in place until this can be achieved. Members asked if the RSB would look at this and were advised that it is a priority of the RSB.

AGREED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations discussed during the Way Forward.

31 : CHILDREN'S SERVICES QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Members were advised that this report provided the Committee with the performance information for the first quarter of 2019/20. Members would have the opportunity to question the Cabinet Member and officers on the performance, as well as the management actions to tackle any areas of poor performance.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver, for this item and invited him to make a statement in which he said that it would be good to see the in-depth version of the performance report.

The Chairperson welcomed Claire Marchant, Director of Social Services and Deborah Driffield, Interim Assistant Director, Children's Services and asked them to present the performance report to Committee.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

Members made reference to the report highlighting issues but lacking in detail on how to resolve the issues, making specific reference to Child/Disabilities. Officers explained that there had been major commissioning work for domiciliary care and there were only 3 providers for Children. There had been engagement exercises before the retendering exercise but there was only so much detail that could be included in the report, but there are significant plans underneath each of the bullet points. A more detailed report could be brought back to Committee.

Members asked about locality working and signs of safety impact on caseloads. Officers considered that caseloads in Cardiff are not significantly higher than elsewhere; they explained that locality working is three localities, with 3 Looked After Children teams in each; the social worker now works with the family rather than the child; this makes it easier to link provision, to step things down and should make it easier to embed Prevent. Signs of safety is a journey, locality will give it more infrastructure, with more managers with time to reflect on practice. It does take longer, working with families to establish a way forward, but it helps in the long run.

Members referred to the proposal for a targeted team of case workers and asked where these would be from. The Assistant Director explained that when she started to make changes in the LAC service there had been a huge backlash and people left; they had commissioned managed teams and bring them in when struggling, it costs money so it's not used lightly but the difference the team had made in just 4 weeks

was incredible. In terms of modelling, the current managers are now working differently too.

Members referred to education needs not being met and asked what the issues are and what is being done to resolve them. Members were advised that this was a significant issue for out of county children, there was a big piece of work underway with education to understand the issues including the provision of education in settings and Cardiff has a low number of hours to meet educational outcomes. The Safeguarding Board and Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee are also focussing on this issue.

In relation to sickness levels and people leaving the service; Members asked whether the culture of the department was being addressed, especially when new people are being recruited. Officers explained that up until recently short term sickness was lower than other departments; long term sickness was more problematic; most are in a disciplinary process although some are not. With regards to Culture, Members were advised that there was a really strong bullying culture when the current Assistant Director had taken up post and this still effects the ability to recruit. It was now clear that this would not be tolerated, it was made clear how current management model appropriate and robust management behaviour; however the bullying had been a long time in existence and would take a while to go. Members asked for numbers of ongoing disciplinary cases and were advised that the figures could be provided after the meeting.

Members noted that staff turnover was quite high and asked for the average length of employment in the last five years. Officers agreed to find out the information and provide it after the meeting; however noted that there was also staff movement internally.

Members considered it was refreshing to hear officers speaking so openly and honestly. This was reiterated by the Cabinet Member who considered it was excellent to see officers be as straight forward with scrutiny as they are with Cabinet Members.

Members made reference to the Reflect project and asked how this was progressing. Officers said this was difficult to answer, it was an excellent project but it had been raised with the adoption service about concerns over the court process. Currently if a child is adopted against wishes then they are offered Reflect. Once the child is adopted then the Council's role stops. The Regional Adoption Service provides ongoing support so officers have asked if they would consider to work with parents to encourage them to go to Reflect further along the process. Officers agreed to look at the number of referrals and provide the information to Committee.

AGREED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations discussed during the Way Forward.

Members were advised that this report provided the Committee with a presentation on the progress being made in embedding the signs of safety model across children's services.

The Chairperson welcomed Claire Marchant, Director of Social Services, Deborah Driffield, Interim Assistant Director for Children's Services and Shirley Saunders, Operational Manager Children's Services and asked them to take Members through their presentation.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

The Chairperson noted that the previous Assistant Director had said over 2 years ago that Cardiff would fully implement signs of safety, and asked how far this had been progressed when the current Assistant Director had taken up post. Members were advised that there had been lots of resistance from senior managers, hostility towards trainers and consultants; a recent meeting with the consultants had considered that Cardiff was around 3/10 on the scales of implementation. It was noted that England was funded by Central Government and have lots of support in terms of this and were still only 5/10 on the scale. It was further noted that Welsh Government haven't adopted signs of safety. It was now year 3 and there was no more money left for training. The Chairperson expressed his frustration with predecessors saying that things were moving along much more than this. The Director of Social Services stated that the building blocks needed to be properly in place and under the previous structure this would not have been possible; major changes were needed including building in posts. The Chairperson considered it may be useful to look at previous responses to Committee letters on this issue, to explain his frustration.

Members appreciated officers' honesty but considered that it raises significant concerns with regard to scrutiny. Members were not clear if 90 staff trained was good or bad; there was no reporting on the impact of signs of safety on children and families; all information was based on the experience of others or research and there was no evidence base. Members asked what exactly was being celebrated in January 2020. Officer's explained that it was around collating data, there was lots of evidence from families/courts etc. but this was difficult to report. It was stated that a performance management/quality assurance system was needed to be able to report; there was evidence of the impact, but it needed to be more coherent on how we report statistically. In relation to training, officers explained this needs to be sustainable, especially for our own workforce in Cardiff. There is a performance plan with 4 quadrants, however it was very difficult to directly evidence that impact is solely down to signs of safety. Officers offered to bring a more scientific report to a future meeting.

Members noted that although there may be anecdotal evidence it would be useful to have a narrative to it. Members asked if there could be a comparison of comments from families/children who have been through signs of safety; officers state this may be possible if they had social workers before and after signs of safety.

Members asked if the Cost avoidance related to actual figures and were advised that they did.

AGREED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations discussed during the Way Forward.

33 : WAY FORWARD

Members discussed the information received and identified a number of issues which the Chairman agreed would be included in the letters that would be sent, on behalf of the Committee, to the relevant Cabinet Members and Officers.

34 : WORK PROGRAMME 2019-2020

RESOLVED: to note the report.

35 : CORRESPONDENCE

RESOLVED: to note the report.

36 : FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: to agree the work programme.

37 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

38 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

8 October 2019 at 4.30pm in Committee Room 4, County Hall.

The meeting terminated at 7.45pm